THOSE "GENTLEMEN" OF GERMANY

The British naval airman who struck down one of the Gothas which had made a raid on undefended Southend on August 12 saw the occupants clinging to their machine in the sea. He threw his lifebelt to them.

When the crew of the Belgian Prince, *torpedoed by the Germans, were on the deck of the U-boat on July* 31 *their lifebelts were taken away from them and flung into the sea by an officer. Later the U-boat dived, leaving the men to drown.*

The murder of thirty-eight members of the crew of the *Belgian Prince* on July 31 is not a new German crime. There could not be a new German crime. But it is an old crime with elements of unique cruelty and will stand out indelibly in the black calendar of the Kaiser's forces. Its perpetrators took every precaution against the details leaking out. That is to say, following the precedent of the Turks in Armenia, they sought to exterminate every living witness for the prosecution. But three members of the crew survive, and their sworn testimony may be inspected at the British Admiralty.

Before quoting these affidavits it may be as well to print the official report issued by the Admiralty on August 6:—

> As has already been reported unofficially in the Press the British steamer *Belgian Prince* was torpedoed by a German submarine on July 31. The crew abandoned the ship in two boats and were ordered on to the upper deck of the submarine by the German commander. Under his directions the boats were then smashed with axes and the crew of the *Belgian Prince* deprived of their lifebelts. The master was taken below and the hatch closed; the submarine submerged without warning with forty-three men standing on her deck. This was the entire crew of the *Belgian Prince*. With the exception of three all these were drowned. The three survivors had contrived to retain their lifebelts without the knowledge of the enemy. They were picked up after having been in the water eleven hours. The details of this atrocious outrage are supported by the

separate affidavits of the three survivors. The cold-blooded murder of these men equals, if it does not transcend, the worst crimes which our enemies have committed against humanity.

Here are the statements of the three survivors:—

1.—THOS. A. BOWMAN, Chief Engineer.

About 7.50 p.m. on July 31 I was on the after deck of the ship off watch. I was taking a stroll and having a smoke. Suddenly I heard a shout, "Here's a torpedo coming," and I looked and saw the wake of what I took to be a torpedo coming towards the ship on the port side. I shouted a warning, but had hardly got the words out of my mouth when the torpedo struck us.

I was thrown on the deck by a piece of spar, and when I recovered I found the ship had got a very heavy list to port, and that nearly all hands had taken to the boats. I got into the starboard lifeboat, which was my station. While we were getting into the boats a submarine began firing at the wires of our wireless apparatus, which she destroyed. I did not see the submarine while she was firing, but when we got some distance away in the boats, about 200 yards, I saw the submarine. She appeared on the forward end of the ship and made towards the boats, and hailed us in English to come alongside of her. We rowed alongside of her, being covered all the time by their machine-guns and revolvers. The commander of the submarine then asked for the captain, the master of my ship, to go on board. He was taken down inside the submarine. The rest of us were ordered on board and lined up on her deck. The German sailors, to whom an officer gave orders in German, then ordered us in English to take off our lifebelts and overcoats and lay them on the deck. Then the sailors came along searching us, and deliberately kicked the majority of the lifebelts overboard. We had to hold up our hands in the surrender position while being searched. Everything of value was taken from us. In my case they took my seaman's discharge book, containing four £1 Treasury Notes and my certificate of competency. They threw my book and ticket overboard and kept the money.

After this the German sailors got into our lifeboats and threw the oars and the gratings in the bottom of the boat and the bailers overboard. They took the provisions and compasses out and put them into the submarine, and then damaged the lifeboats, rendering them useless by breaking the sides of the boats with some instruments which I took to be the axes carried by the lifeboats as part of their equipment. They then cast the boats adrift.

The small boat was left intact, and five German sailors got into her and went towards the ship. When they reached the *Belgian Prince* they signalled with a flash-lamp to the submarine. The submarine moved ahead about two and a half miles, then stopped, and after a moment or two I heard a rushing sound, like water rushing into the sinking tanks of the submarine, and I shouted "Look out—she is sinking!"

The submarine submerged, leaving the whole of our crew, except the captain, who was still below, in the water with no means of escape except in the case of the few who still retained their life-

belts. I attempted to jump clear, but was carried down with the submarine, and when I came to the surface I could only see about a dozen of the crew left, including one boy who was shouting for help. I swam towards him. He had a lifebelt on, but was about paralysed, and I held him up during the night. He became unconscious, and eventually died while I was holding him up.

When day broke I saw the *Belgian Prince* still afloat. I began to swim towards her, and when I had gone a short distance I saw her blow up. After seeing the ship sink, I just drifted about and kept myself afloat for an hour or two until I saw smoke on the horizon from a ship which came in my direction. She proved to be an English patrol boat. I swam towards her and she picked me up.—(Signed) THOMAS A. BOWMAN.

2.—GEORGE SLISKI, Member of the Crew.

On Tuesday, July 31, at about 7.55 p.m., a torpedo from a submarine struck the *Belgian Prince*. The crew, including myself, got into the ship's boats, and a few minutes afterwards a German submarine came alongside and called for the master, who went on board, and was taken down into the submarine. The remainder of the crew were mustered on the deck of the submarine. The oars, bailers, and gratings of two of the ship's boats were thrown into the water, and the boats themselves broken up with axes. The third boat the Germans took, and rowed towards the *Belgian Prince*.

A German officer ordered all the crew of the *Belgian Prince* to take off their lifebelts which they were wearing, also their overcoats, and this was done. The submarine steamed away, and about half an hour afterwards the Germans went below. The submarine submerged, leaving the entire crew on the deck, with the exception of the captain, who had been taken below.

I then swam towards the *Belgian Prince,* which I reached about 5 a.m. the following morning. I got on board, and about half an hour afterwards a German submarine came alongside. I got into the water. Two shells were fired at the *Belgian Prince,* which sank in two or three minutes. I saw a small boat, which I swam to and got into—the same boat the Germans took away the previous evening—and about half an hour afterwards I was picked up by a British patrol boat.—(Signed) GEORGE SLISKI.

3.—WILLIE SNELL, an American Citizen.

On July 31, about 8 p.m., I heard an explosion. Three lifeboats were lowered, and everyone on board got into these. When about fifty yards from the vessel a German submarine came up, and the commander ordered all the boats alongside. The master was ordered below in the submarine, and the remainder of us were mustered on the deck. The oars, gratings, bailers, and everything loose in the boats which we had left were thrown overboard by the German submarine crew. We were now ordered by the submarine commander to take off our lifebelts and leave them on deck, which was done. He then came along and kicked many of the lifebelts off into the water.

The submarine proceeded away from the *Belgian Prince* and submerged, leaving our entire crew, with the exception of the master, on its deck without any means to save ourselves. I concealed

a lifebelt which I had picked up, which the German commander failed to notice when he was kicking the lifebelts overboard. I now put it on, and when the submarine disappeared I swam towards the *Belgian Prince*. At about 5 a.m. I was about one mile off the vessel when she broke in two. Immediately afterwards I saw a submarine come up. I turned and swam away as quickly as I could, and was afterwards picked up by a British patrol boat.—(Signed) WILLIE SNELL.

In recognition of his gallant act in torpedoing the *Lusitania* the Kaiser conferred upon Captain-Lieutenant Hersing, commander of U 21, the Order Pour Le Mérite; but he told Mr. Gerard, U.S. Ambassador in Berlin, that he "would not have permitted the torpedoing of the *Lusitania* if he had known it," and that "no gentleman would kill so many women and children." Obviously, after the *Belgian Prince* case, other German "gentlemen" deserve the Order Pour Le Mérite!

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